

Hiroshima Time

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Sipping Tea at 200MPH



You're sitting in the coach of a bullet train that is running at 350 kilometers per hour eating your lunch. The ride is so smooth that unless you look outside you have no idea of the intense speed you are rolling down the rails.

The stretch we road from Tokyo to Hiroshima is 894 kilometers long with stops in Yokohama, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe and Okayama before arriving. The entire track is elevated over the landscape like a bridge that is 500 miles long. What is more amazing is that the track goes straight through the mountains instead of winding around

them so while you are flying along you constantly are going in and out of tunnels. They have dedicated track meaning that the southbound trains have a southbound track and the northbound has a northbound track so there is no chance of error. The tracks are right together so when you pass another train and both are going 200mph it makes for quite an experience.

They call the bullet trains the Shinkansen and there several different lines stretching over 2,000 kilometers of track across Japan. The trains come in different classes called Kodomo, Hikari and Super Nozomi and can reach up

to 16 cars long. On each train there are coach and first class seating and usually there are vending machines and ladies that walk the isles with carts of food and drinks.

In our case riding the Shinkansen Hikari class from Tokyo to Hiroshima we had a rail pass but if you were to buy a ticket it would run about \$200. With the rail pass we had two options; one was to reserve a seat in first class or we could just get on the train but in coach – we opted to reserve a seat.

The Japanese have built an even faster train that runs on magnets where the cars hover over the track so there is no friction to slow the train down. Maybe we will get a chance to ride it...



Girls Just Want to Have Fun



One level at a time, the girls had over 10 levels of shops to cover.

One thing is for sure and that is the Japanese love to shop and have perfected it to a science. Everywhere you go there will be some kind of shopping mall, arcade, underground market or just stores along the street. And in the stores there is such a variety of items you become overwhelmed with so much selection and so many decisions of what to buy.

We did some research and for young ladies fashions the place to go was a section, or they call it ward, of Tokyo named Shibuya. Shibuya is a shopping mecca with streets lined with name brand shops and skyscraper sized malls.

Shibuya 109 was the first stop - a 10 story mall with about 20 shops on each floor dedicated to only

designer young ladies clothes. The problem in Japan is that they are 98% all the same size as they are a very pure race. This means that it is more of a one size fits all in the stores.

After making our way up and down 20 escalators we headed to a famous shopping street in Harajuku about 3 blocks over. The street was closed to vehicles and jammed with people; which was not that bad

until it started to rain and everyone opened an umbrella. At this point we were caught in the middle of a human traffic jam moving at the speed of a banana slug.

When you are caught in a sardine can the only thing you want to do is get out of it and you are suddenly not concerned about shopping. About 20 minutes later we exited the street about 100 feet down and headed back to the hotel.



How Sweet It Is

The Japanese people definitely have a sweet tooth because everywhere



You go there are shops full of sugary goodness.

One of our favorites seems to be the crepe shops that make the thin pancakes and wrap them up like a super sized ice cream cone. You can get the crepe in a wide variety of flavors and eat them right there.

But there are a lot more options such as cake

shops, mochi vendors, waffle stands, pastry shops and the markets are full of sweets as well. Even when you are at the train stations there are stands and shops full of different types of sweets.

For all the sugar being sold and eaten I can only imagine all the tooth decay yet I have to see a dentist anywhere.

Horror in Hiroshima



It was 65 years ago when the Atomic bombed armed Enola Gay B-29 Super Fortress bomber took off from Guam and headed for Hiroshima, Japan. The bomb called "Little Boy" was only 1/3000th the power of today's nuclear weapons but it still demolished an entire city and killed 140,000 people.

For the civilians on the ground all they say were 3 airplanes dropping parachutes and many people just stood there watching with no idea of the 5,000 degree fireball that was coming. The parachutes were measurement devises to

sense the effects of the bomb.

On that day, after the explosion, only one photographer went into the city and he took only five photos before he could not take any more because of the horror. People were everywhere struggling to survive with burns covering their bodies.

Touring the museum in the center of the city you are overwhelmed with the devastation of nuclear weapons seeing pictures and images taken weeks afterwards of the burned victims. It has an effect on a person and makes

you wonder why we need nuclear weapon and of the dangers of all the rogue nations that possess them.

Japan is in the forefront of many nations trying to rid the world of nuclear weapons or at a minimum the reduction of them by 2020. After walking through the museum you come to realize that it would not be a bad thing to live in a world without weapons of mass destruction.

As a reminder of the devastation the city left the structure behind Madison in the picture at top left called A Bomb Dome. It is the only remaining damage in Hiroshima which is now a large and busy metropolis with shopping malls and skyscrapers towing around the dome.

-Scott



"Maddi standing in front of a picture taken of Hiroshima after the bomb was dropped and in the picture to the left she is standing in front of the same A Bomb dome today."

A Bee's Gourmet Heaven

In the United States you go to a restaurant and maybe there is a menu outside so you can read about what is available. But what can 5 or six words actually say about the plate of food you are going to order.

Well in Japan they have solved the problem by making exact wax models of each entrée on the menu so there is no misunderstanding of what you thought and what you got. The wax duplicates are usually displayed in front of the establishment either behind a glass wall or in a glass display case.

Sometimes the wax models look so real you are not even sure if they are fakes. They are not only for dinner entrees; we

have seen models for desserts, drinks at a bar, ice cream and even pieces of fish for sushi.

Sometimes there can be an entire street of restaurants each showing

there displays. For us this can also serve as a second purpose as a lot of wait staff do not speak English – so all we have to do is point at the dish we want and presto.



"A wax meal is on display outside a restaurant at Hiroshima Station."



Street Shows

As you walk the streets of major cities in Japan you are more than likely to come across some kind of

street performance. Here though they are not begging for money but just happy to put on a show or

possible getting paid in some form we have not yet discovered.

The other day we saw a man on 8 foot stilts with pogo sticks on them and 8 foot arm extensions as well. He was in an evil gold costume and ran through the crowd chasing the children. It was quite a sight to say the least but at the same time it was very fun and entertaining as the Japanese have a good sense of humor.

